

The Rising Tide of Left Wing Extremism in India and Implications for National Security

Amit Kumar Singh



KONWLEDGE WORLD

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
New Delhi

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Centre for Land Warfare Studies
New Delhi



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KONWLEDGE WORLD
www.kwpublishers.com

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Published in India by

Kalpana Shukla

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd

NEW DELHI: 4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002

MUMBAI: 15 Jay Kay Industrial Estate, Linking Road Extn., Santacruz (W), Mumbai 400054

email: knowledgeworld@vsnl.net

Printed at Parangat Offset Pvt Ltd, New Delhi

The Rising Tide of Left Wing Extremism in India and Implications for National Security

AMIT KUMAR SINGH

Left wing extremism (henceforth referred to as LWE) has emerged as one of the major security challenges in the South Asian region. This cannot merely be perceived as a manifestation of the prolonged state-building process that the states within the region have been undergoing. The movement could also be interpreted as an effort towards dismantling the prevailing unequal socio-economic and political structures that are understood by these radical left wing groups to have been serving the interests of upper strata of the society. Within the South Asian region, the movement is being carried forward by various operationally and organisationally exclusive but ideologically linked groups. Though they have different organisational structures, strategies and goals and areas of influence and operation, there have been efforts recently to integrate such movements in the region. The relative success that these groups have been able to achieve varies from place to place and group to group.

In India, the geographical spread and growing militarisation of some of the left extremist groups (henceforth referred to as LEGs) – mainly the Communist Party of India (Maoist) – CPI (M) – is a cause for concern. No wonder, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has characterised Maoist insurgency as “India’s greatest internal security threat.” Though there

is still some confusion regarding the nature and quantum of threat that these groups pose to India, it is abundantly clear that in the years to come, LWE would have the potential of seriously challenging India's integrity as a nation.

This paper makes an attempt to contextualise the nature and spread of LWE and the threat it poses to the Indian state. It traces the background of the movement to provide a comprehensive understanding of its evolution and spread and goes on to describe its present manifestation. It ends with an assessment of its growing menace and potential to seriously undermine national security. The terms "Naxalites", "Maoists" and "Left Wing Extremists" have been used interchangeably.

Origins and Evolution of Left Wing Extremism in India

The roots of LWE in India lie in the leftist/Communist political movements, labour and agrarian unrests, the revolutionary societies and the tribal revolts that erupted during various phases of colonial rule in India. Though these movements failed to reach their stated objectives, the revolutionary fervour they had instilled among the deprived sections and the mass mobilisation they were able to achieve was carried over to the post-independence period. These movements revealed that even resourceless and illiterate people can be organised and turned into a formidable force.

The independence of India from the clutches of foreign rule raised immense hopes among the landless, tribals and other downtrodden sections within the country. It didn't take too long for the masses to realise that independence had brought nothing new for them and almost everything had remained the same. Neither was there any hope of change in the future. Electoral politics was dominated by the land owners and the land reforms that were promised were not being taken up in the expected spirit. The old exploitative structure had continued in a different garb. This led to a lot of disillusionment and frustration among the masses. They could recollect the prophecies of the early leftist leaders and revolutionaries that the political independence of India from British rule would in effect mean a change of exploiters and the socio-economic structure would remain the same and that an armed revolution will be needed to end the exploitation.

This disillusionment found expression in the increased support in favour of the left parties during the second general elections which led to the formation of a left majority government in Kerala. The imposition of president's rule in Kerala came as a rude shock to the left supporters and shook their confidence in electoral politics. At the same time, the Communist Party of India (CPI) in Bengal was also gaining strength and the United Front (of which it was a part) was the main opposition party. The radicals within the party accused the party leadership of being "revisionists" as they opted for parliamentary democracy. The growing dissensions within the party ultimately led to the split of the CPI. The newly formed party, i.e. Communist Party of India (M) also participated in the United Front governments in Bengal and Kerala in 1967. But nothing substantial was realised on the ground. Its participation in the formation of the United Front government was perceived by the radicals as a "revisionist" trend. They were in favour of adopting various drastic measures and programmes, including armed struggle, but their demands were turned down by the top left leadership. The discontentment grew and the radicals within the CPI (M) began to doubt the revolutionary zeal of the leadership. They were convinced that an armed revolution was the only way out. Since they were deeply inspired by Mao's success in China, they wanted to replicate the same in India. They lost patience and start mobilising the tribals, the landless and the share-cultivators and began what is termed as the revolutionary "armed struggle" in certain pockets of Bengal. The movement crystallised into an organised armed movement in the aftermath of a police firing incident in Naxalbari village in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal on May 25, 1967.¹

The Naxalbari Phase

The Naxalbari incident could be seen as the trigger that launched the transformation of a primarily political and socio-economic agrarian movement into an armed struggle. The incident was a fall-out of the underground efforts undertaken by the radical hardline Communist leaders like Charu Majumdar, Jangal Santhal and Kanu Sanyal who were able to motivate and mobilise the landless peasants to forcibly occupy the land belonging to the landlords whom they called "class enemies". However, some have a view that it was a result of years of ideological and tactical

preparations and that the seizure of state power through an armed struggle was already on the agenda of the radical Communists when this incident took place.²

The radicals comprehended the Indian situation then to be similar to that in China prior to 1949 and characterised it as essentially semi-colonial and semi-feudal. Based on that analysis, the revolutionaries concluded that the “People’s Democratic Revolution” should be launched in India by immediately resorting to armed struggle on Chinese lines.³ Radical Communists from different parts of the country rallied around Charu Majumdar. In 1967, the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) was formed to reconcile the differences within the CPI (M) party.⁴ It failed and the radical leaders were expelled from the party. They then formed a new party called Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) i.e. the CPI (ML), on April 22, 1969. Charu Majumdar was the secretary of the Central Organising Committee of the newly floated party. Radio Peking acknowledged the formation of CPI (ML) on July 2, 1969.⁵ The party was to follow the Maoist line to achieve revolution.

The ripples of the Naxalbari incident were felt in different parts of the country. The Red Flag movement was launched by K Sundaram and Nenjil Selvan in Tamil Nadu. Similar movements were organised in Bihar (Muzaffarpur), Kerala (Wynad and Tellichery) and parts of Orissa, Punjab and UP. The movement that was started by T Nagi Reddy in Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh) was the strongest among all these. Not all the groups were in ideological sync or affiliated to the CPI (ML). Some had ideological and operational difference with the former. The ideological factor, however, was much less than the leadership tussle.

The state responses were varied during the first phase of LWE. The United Front government in West Bengal was embarrassed due to the behaviour of its own cadres and put down the uprising ruthlessly. It dismissed the uprising as “Left Adventurism” and launched a major offensive on July 12, 1967. The clashes were brutal. During 1969-72, fierce battles raged between CPI (ML) and government authorities, resulting in large-scale violence and bloodshed. The government also seriously undertook land reforms. With the coming into power of the Congress supported government in Bengal in the year 1971, a major operation named “Steeple

Chase” was launched in which the military, paramilitary and state forces participated jointly in the Naxal affected areas. The extremist movement was brought under control within two months. The movement finally died out after the arrest and death of Charu Majumdar in July 1972.⁶ In other parts of the country as well, the movement died out gradually and there was a lull for about a decade.

Even though the “Naxalbari uprising” was a failure, it marked the beginning of the violent LWE movement in India, and the terms “Naxalism” and “Naxalite” were born. Identification of revolutionary politics with the name of a village, and not with the name of the leader is unique in history. Thereafter, it reemerged in the early Eighties, continued to gain base, and has been expanding continuously since then.

During this phase, the movement could not win the support of the poor peasants, sharecroppers, agricultural labourers, urban middle class and the workers at large as they did not view it as a struggle for their own cause. Besides, the masses were not mentally prepared to go in for an “armed struggle.” The excessive identification with China robbed the extremists of a nationalistic image and this factor, to a large extent, was responsible for their isolation from the common people. The movement was based on an over-optimistic evaluation of the possibility of advancing rapidly and the under-estimation of the state’s strength.⁷ Devoid of broader mass support, the movement, notwithstanding the courage, sacrifice and motivation of the activists and the protagonists, gradually petered away. However, the leaders succeeded in providing both an ideological veneer and cutting edge militancy to the nascent Marxist-Leninist movement. They also succeeded in attracting some of the best minds among the idealistic youth of the country.

Post-Charu Phase: Early 1970s-2004

Charu Majumdar’s death came as a blow to the Naxalites across the country. With his death, the central authority of the Naxalist movement collapsed. Thereafter, the CPI (ML) disintegrated into innumerable groups and sub-groups which were engaged in internecine squabbles and accusing each other of betrayal and pursuing the wrong line of thought and action. There were many instances of splinter groups targeting each other’s cadres. Many factions of various sizes bearing the same name CPI (ML) continue to survive

even to this day. The 1970s and 1980s were witness to bitter polemics which divided these groups, but, at the same time, there were efforts to rebuild the Maoist movement as a whole.

In 1971, Satyanarain Singh revolted against Charu Majumdar's "annihilation" policy and started his own group called the CPI (ML) Satyanarain Singh Group (SNS).⁸ Similarly, during the 1971 Indo-Pak War, Ashim Chatterjee and Santosh Rana also left the CPI (ML) due to Charu Majumdar's opposition to the Indian government's position.⁹ Mahadev Mukherjee and B N Sharma assumed the leadership of the CPI (ML) after the death of Charu Majumdar. But the unity did not last long as Mahadev Mukherjee expelled Sharma. Another split in the Mahadev Mukherjee camp came when CPI (ML) split between pro-Lin Biao and anti-Lin Biao groups.¹⁰

From the late 1970s onwards, the centre of gravity of Naxalism gradually shifted from West Bengal to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. The "Liberation" group in Bihar and the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh emerged as the two most important LEGs. In 1974, the pro-Mao, pro-Charu Majumdar, anti-Lin Biao faction of the CPI (ML) was reorganised by Subrata Dutta alias Jauhar and renamed CPI (ML) "Liberation." This faction emerged as one of the strongest of all Naxal outfits and claimed to be the rightful successor of Charu Majumdar's CPI (ML). Vinod Mishra was elected as general secretary of "Liberation" in 1975 after Jauhar was killed in a police encounter. Although he claimed to follow the Charu Majumdar line, he was the first Naxal leader to recognise the futility of armed rebellion against the Indian government. Without explicitly renouncing the methods of Charu Majumdar, he started a "rectification movement" which was aimed at rectifying the shortcomings and lapses in the armed rebellion. As a part of this new line of thinking, "Liberation" joined the mass mobilisation and jumped into electoral politics in 1982 through a front organisation called the Indian People's Front (IPF). The IPF was envisioned as a nationwide alternative to the Congress Party. In the year 1989, IPF won a seat in the parliamentary elections and the first Naxalite member entered the Indian Parliament.

Yet another group in Bihar, which was then called "Dakshin Desh," was founded in 1969 by Kanhai Chatterjee and Amulya Sen.¹¹ This organisation was later named as the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in the year 1975. This group mainly comprised lower caste and landless people and was

extremely savage in executing landlords. The landlords belonging to the upper/middle caste saw this group as a threat to their dominance and raised private militias. Gangs like Ranvir Sena¹² ruthlessly massacred Naxalites and those who were suspected to be Naxalite sympathisers. Unlike the CPI (ML), which went through a series of splits, the MCC remained intact. It merged with the Revolutionary Communist Centre, India (Maoist) to form the Maoist Communist Centre (India) or MCC (I) in 2003.

Andhra Pradesh had also witnessed LWE since the Naxalbari days. It was led by T Nagi Reddy, D V Rao and Pulla Reddy who were expelled from the AICCCR due to differences with Charu Majumdar.¹³ The splits that plagued the CPI (ML) did not spare the Andhra group either. In 1971, Pulla Reddy separated from T Nagi Reddy and D V Rao and formed his own party. Pulla Reddy later joined hands with Satyanarain Singh [CPI (ML) SNS group]. That unity did not last long and they parted ways again. Meanwhile, after the death of T Nagi Reddy, D V Rao became the leader of the Andhra group. During the early 1970s, most of the Naxalite activity was concentrated around Srikakulam district. The government forces successfully neutralised their influence by killing the top leaders like Appalasuri, Adibhatla Kailasam, etc. One of the biggest advantages of the Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh has been their ability to gather support among teachers, writers and civil liberties groups. These groups have successfully provided the needed justification for violence perpetrated by the Naxals by highlighting the failures of the government and pointing out the excesses of the police forces. A large number of movies, sympathetic to the cause of Naxalites are produced in Andhra Pradesh even today. In the late 1970s, Kondapalli Seetharamayya successfully rebuilt the Naxal movement, which had lost steam due to the police actions. From Srikakulam area, the Naxals successfully shifted their base to the Telangana region, especially Adilabad, Karimnagar and Warangal. Unlike the Charu Majumdar line, the Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh were not averse to the mass line. However, by the early 1990s, the government had slowly regained the upper hand over the Naxals in Andhra.

During this phase, some extremist groups such as the MCC and the PWG were making constant efforts towards forming a joint front. Despite ideological commonalities and shared objectives, the pathways to the merger

were full of obstacles, with territorial and leadership clashes giving rise to an internecine conflict. The two groups struggled for supremacy in different areas which resulted in the death of hundreds of cadres and sympathisers. However, towards the end of the millennium, the efforts towards forming a joint front bore partial fruit. The creation of Jharkhand state in November 2000 and anti-Maoist operations launched by the administration pushed the MCC and PWG into closer cooperation, and a truce was announced. Significantly, the PWG had earlier merged with the CPI (ML) (Party Unity) of Bihar on August 11, 1998. The ideological differences have now been ironed over, with Maoism prevailing.

Towards the end of the millennium, the CPI (ML)-PWG, the MCC-I and the Janashakti emerged as the main LEGs. The efforts towards unification among the various LEGs were also intensified. Besides, increased efforts were directed towards organising regular militias. The People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) was reportedly founded as the military wing of the PWG on December 2000 by reorganising its guerrilla force. It emerged as the strongest LEG which had the widest mass base and the strongest military.

Emergence of the CPI (Maoist): 2004-Present

The efforts to form a joint front resulted in the merger of the MCC (I) with the CPI (ML) People's War in September 2004 to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist) or the CPI (M), which emerged as the most powerful Naxalite group in the country.¹⁴ The merger augmented the group's support base and imparted it a pan-Indian revolutionary group character. The two guerrilla armies of the PWG and the MCC – the People's Guerrilla Army (PGA) and the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), respectively – also merged under the agreement. The new armed force reportedly operates under the name of PLGA since December 2, 2004. The PLGA has been able to attain military level precision and sophistication both in terms of tactics and equipment.

As of today, there are around 38 to 40 LEGs with their area of influence and operation extending to around 194 out of the total 602 districts of India. There was an attempt to bring CPI (ML-Janshakti) into the CPI (M) fold but somehow the effort did not attain the desired result and the former decided to provide need-based support only.¹⁵

The extremists aim at establishing a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) from Nepal to Tamil Nadu. The merger has brought the Maoists closer to their objective of 'liberating' their proposed CRZ. Its realisation would give them domination over the vital mineral and industrial areas of India as this area contains most of India's coal, iron and aluminium mines. By controlling this area, they would be able to control the industrial base of the country.

The 9th Party Congress (2007) of the LEGs was held after a gap of 36 years. It emphasised forming a joint front and launched an appeal to take the movement to the next stage of the Maoist strategy. It was also decided to protest against the special economic zones (SEZs) and the setting up of industries by acquiring forest and tribal land. It appealed to the groups to upgrade the PLGAs to the regular People's Liberation Army (PLA), deepen the mass base and wage a militant mass movement against the neo-liberal policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation.¹⁶

During the last few years, increasingly more efforts are being directed towards gathering and mobilising international public opinion to put pressure on governmental agencies. Available reports indicate that the CPI (M) is currently strengthening the formation of all three forces of the PLGA – the basic, secondary and main forces. Lately, an increased presence of the Naxalites in the urban areas and the industrial belts has been observed.

Factors that led to the Emergence of Left Wing Extremism in India

A variety of explanations have been offered while explaining the causes of the emergence of LWE in India. While analysing the motivational aspects, some contend that it is the result of the attempts to end injustice, deprivations, and oppression suffered by the adivasis, dalits, and other traditionally discriminated groups. Others have a view that the conflict may have started for these reasons, but continued because extremists are quasi-mafias, selfishly motivated by money and individual benefits derived from the conflict. There has, however, been an explicit acknowledgement that some of the Naxals' demands are legitimate.

Governance Related Factors

The malfunctioning of government machinery in terms of inefficiency, corruption and exploitation is largely considered as the main factor behind the creation of a power vacuum as well as a space for Maoists to take root and find legitimacy amongst the deprived and impoverished sections of the populace in the country. The emergence of LWE of such huge proportions could be directly attributed to the failure of successive governments to address the aspirations of the common masses in the most deprived regions of the country. Since the fulfilment of these was not coming from the government, a natural recourse was to go for an alternative. The mass mobilisation and support that the left extremists have been able to gather has only been possible due to the inherent disenchantment with the prevalent system. They thrive upon the continuing grievances of the people.

Governance, particularly in the remote areas, is poor or non-existent. The neglect of these areas may be gauged from the fact that no governmental surveys of any type have been ever undertaken in these areas till date. Table I clearly brings out the various dimensions (literacy, urbanisation, health, etc) of disparities and the relative deprivation within the regions that are most affected by Naxal influence. In these regions, any form of state structure, whether it is the contractor or a local official, is perceived as an exploiter. The Naxals, on the other hand, reached out to the people, understood them, took up their issues and fought for their dignity and rights.¹⁷ They have earned goodwill among the tribals and the downtrodden. These people are attracted to the extremists' ideologies through which they perceive their future liberation from the centuries old socio-economic and political deprivation. Therefore, Maoist indoctrination affects such deprived sections the most.

Table I

	Orissa		Jharkhand		Chhattisgarh		Bihar		Andhra Pradesh	
	Affected Districts									
Share of SC/ST (%)*	65	23	45	30	69	36	19	18	26	22
Literacy rate (%)*	44	76	40	51	50	68	46	48	56	68
Infantry Mortality rate (%) (1999)	123	73	n/a	n/a	76	57	n/a	n/a	34	28
Urbanisation (%)	17	23	10	37	7	29	12	8.6	24	27
Forest Coverage (%)*	39	15	38	16	53	28	8	1	17	14
Agriculture Labourers (%)*	35	25	29	20	26	34	52	46	40	51
Percapita Foodgrain production	151	96	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	121	293
Road length per 100 sq.kms, (1996/97)	n/a	44	70							
Rural HH with no Bank a/c (%)*	81	80	77	74	83	82	83	80	69	72
Rural HH without specified assets (%)	63	37	46	36	47	31	53	50	56	41

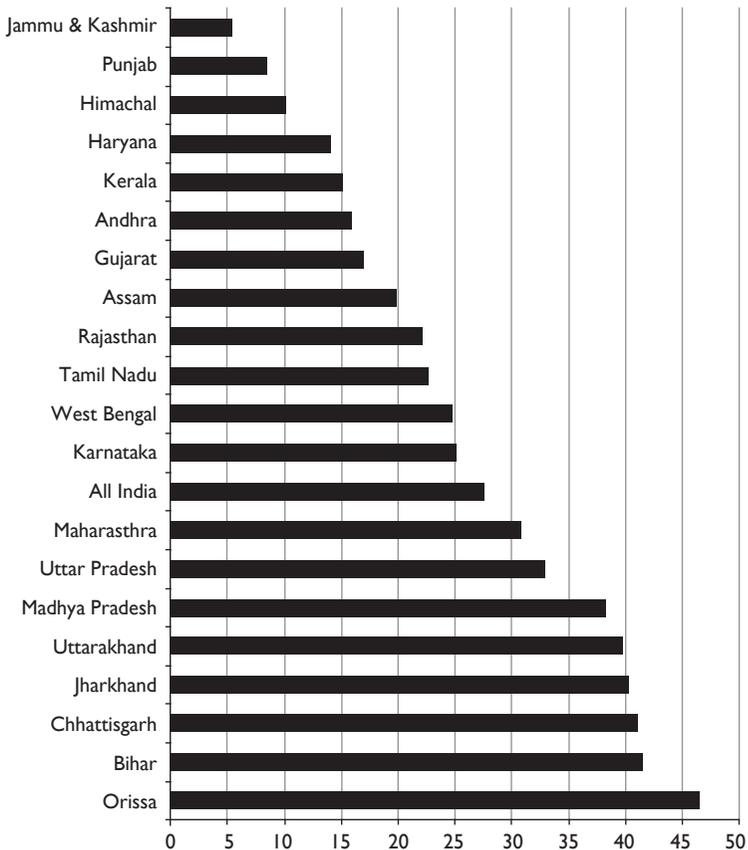
Source: "Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas", Report of an Expert Committee to the Planning Commission, April 2008.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors

There is a direct correlation between economic deprivation and growth in the influence of the LEGs. Beyond doubt, the areas where these groups are the most active, have been the most underdeveloped and neglected ones. The extent of poverty and the opportunities for economic growth among the poor and the deprived continue to be dismal. Land reforms remain a neglected area and feudalistic exploitation continues as such.¹⁸ There is widespread frustration among the masses due to the prevalent inequities. The benefits of economic growth have not filtered down. Rather, the people have borne the developmental collateral. Lack of employment opportunities for the youth in the relatively deprived regions of the country allows Naxal

groups to recruit more and more people. Many arrested Naxals from various Naxal infested areas have testified that their primary incentive to join the Naxals was to ensure an adequate salary. The statistics in Table 2 depict the level of poverty in percentage terms. The poverty levels in the Naxal affected states of Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are much higher (with more than 40 percent of the population living below the poverty line).

Figure 1
Poverty Levels in Major States (%)



Source: Poverty Estimates for 2004-2005, Planning Commission, March 2007, <http://planningcommission.nic.in/news/prmar07.pdf>

Governmental policies on forest reserves have profoundly affected lives of the tribal people. Wherever the state has chosen to exploit forests, it has seriously undermined the tribals' way of life. The economic policies that were adopted, propagated and implemented in colonial as well as independent India went against the way of life of the tribals who perceived land as a community resource, free for whoever needed it. By the time the tribal people were able to accept the necessity of obtaining formal land titles, they had lost the opportunity to lay claim to lands that might rightfully have been considered as theirs. Besides, the tribals felt severely disadvantaged in dealing with the government officials who granted land titles. The economic policies led to an increased migration of outsiders into the tribal lands. The deadly combination of constabulary and revenue officers uninterested in tribal welfare and the non-tribals resorting to bribing of local officials was sufficient to deprive many tribals of their landholdings.

All the developmental projects that have been implemented in these areas have failed to improve the status of the tribal population. Rather, they have been largely displaced, without adequate rehabilitation. Displacement of the populace, especially the tribals, due to the setting up of new industries has been viewed by the extremists as an ideal issue to bolster their ranks.

Economic deprivation continues, and has become even more acute, in the era of globalisation. The tribals have an apprehension that the mineral wealth of their native regions would be exploited by the multinational companies and they would get nothing in return. The adverse effects of globalisation that are being suffered by the already deprived sections of the society have further provided an opportunity to the extremists to capitalise on the increased insecurities of the masses. It is becoming easier for them to point out, and justify, the failure of the prevalent system. They are also able to convince more and more people of the need of a revolutionary change.

The cultural dimension as a factor behind the emergence of LWE in the country is also important. The prevalent state structure does not accommodate the cultural ethos of the tribals as the extremists' proposed structure does. There are some areas where the extremists were the first people to establish contact with the inhabitants. In such cases, a natural bond has developed between the tribals and the Naxals. The extremists assured them of decentralised/localised development wherein they would be able

to preserve and pursue their cultural traditions freely with dignity and self-respect. The extremists aim at revolutionary transformation of the society and their propagated ideology falls well within the cultural and communal ethos of all sections of the society, including the tribals.

The Naxals have taken due cognisance of the prevalent social-economic inequities along economic, caste and gender lines and promise to free society of all forms of exploitation. They oppose the prevalent caste system in vehement terms as they perceive it as a class question. Therefore, they have called upon the 125 million dalits to join their ranks.¹⁹ In Bihar, LWE has been closely associated with caste differences, land-related disputes and labour exploitation. Being an agrarian economy, the disputes regarding distribution of land, minimum wages and working conditions were contentious issues between largely upper caste landlords and the landless lower caste poor. Some of the landless poor drifted towards LWE to fight against oppression.

Political Marginalisation of the Downtrodden

The pace of political reforms in India aiming at ensuring participatory democracy has been very slow. The prevalent political system leaves little space for the common man to aspire for a role in decision-making, and appears to perpetuate the existing exploitative structure. There is no sense of allegiance to the system among the common gentry. On the contrary, the system proposed and followed by the extremists appears to be the most participatory. It attracts the common man towards their ideology where everyone has a say and a role to play. The extremists aim at, and assure people of, putting in place a new democratic society. These groups are able to convince people that peaceful methods of resistance would not be able to bring about the necessary change because vested interests control the levers of power and that an armed struggle is the only way out.

Factors that Sustain the Movement

In addition to the above mentioned factors which had remained more or less constant for decades, various other factors are responsible for the sustenance and expansion of LWE in India. The Naxals capitalise on every discrepancy or fault line that they discover in the prevalent system and lose no opportunity to denigrate it. Besides, the fact that it embodies a response to the prevalent

socio-political and economic wrongs, the movement has always remained relevant and pertinent.

An Appealing Ideology

The movement derives strength from the mainspring of the international Communist movement – especially the Chinese variant of it. One constant feature of Naxal ideology has been that at all times it visualises and propagates that imperialism is heading towards total collapse. This belief is the driving force of the movement. This belief also allows them to blame the present wrongs on the capitalist economic structure.

The ideological underpinnings are complex, varying from tribalism to Communism. The Naxalites themselves see their actions as the creative application of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to Indian conditions which calls for the overthrow of the capitalist state through a protracted “people’s war”. The development and growth divide is the key paradigm and Naxalites are adept at manipulating local grievances.²⁰ The mobilisation of the cadres along ideological lines symbolises the strength, commitment and deep-rootedness of the movement. It is because of the ideological underpinnings that Maoist movements have been receiving support and sustenance from various civil society organisations.

The Maoist ideology that these groups propagate provides an alternative system that appears to accommodate the socio-cultural, economic and political aspirations of each individual. On the other hand, the present state system is perceived to have gone against the way of life of most of the people residing in the inaccessible and underdeveloped regions. In the backdrop of the political success of the Maoists in Nepal, this factor has gained all the more credence. The cadres’ commitment to ideology imparts resilience to the movement. That is why even when the state had been able to crush the movement militarily and politically in the past, it could resurrect itself in a much larger way. Besides, the ideology allows them to capitalise on political, social and economic issues of the day to retain their relevance.

Organisational Strength of the Extremist Groups

The consolidation of various factions of the LEGs has been attributed to the organised, institutionalised and planned manner in which the Naxals

function. The ideological dedication, the cadre-based organisational set-up and understanding of the micro socio-economic situation in the various regions of India makes the extremists plan, operate and implement their strategies efficiently. There is an element of popular support as well. The movement has been able to sustain many ups and downs, and has now assumed greater proportions. This proves the commitment and dedication of the members to their cause and also explains the emerging solidarity and unity among the groups despite differences. There is a Central Committee and a Politburo at the apex. The hierarchical structure, which flows from the Regional Bureaus – State Committee/Special Zonal Committee – Zones and Sub-zones – District/Division Committee – Squad Area Committee, is well established and institutionalised. The armed wing is divided into various Zonal Committees, each of which has a few divisions and dalams. At the village level, they have units called “Sangam” comprising ideologically committed active supporters.

Funding Sources

The Naxals have been able to strategically target every source of wealth generation in their areas of influence as funding is essential for their sustenance. To finance their activities, the Naxalites “accept contributions” in the form of “taxes and levies,” loot government treasuries and banks and also extort vast amounts from businesses, industries, political leaders, government officials, rich landlords and professionals. The extremists live by the gun, reaping a rich harvest of extortion and tax collection with revenues to the tune of Rs.1,000 crore a year.²¹ The quantum of collection varies from state to state. As per the estimates, the total collection from Bihar and Chhattisgarh is around Rs.200 crore and Rs.150 crore respectively,²² while that from Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh it is about Rs.350 crore and Rs.100 crore respectively.²³

The Naxals exercise a monopolistic control over the forest produce and government contracts in their areas of dominance. They receive a substantial share of all development funding flowing into these areas.²⁴ All government contracted construction works, auctions, coal and mineral mining companies, illegal mining activities, road contractors, and other industries in these areas come under their extortion network. During the

season in which the tendu leaves* are plucked, these groups move to the areas where the leaves are grown and employ strong arm methods to extort money from the contractors. Besides, they organise the labourers employed in the collection of tendu, fight for their wages and accept contributions from them in the name of party funds.²⁵ In addition, the Naxalites also engage in, or control, significant levels of illegal economic activity, especially harvesting and smuggling of forest produce. Smuggling of tendu leaves and other forest products such as opium and kattha** also adds to their coffers.²⁶ Supporters and sympathisers also make contributions.

The enormous funds that the Naxals have been able to extort allow them to maintain their increasing cadre strength and function over vast stretches of territory. The funds are utilised in various ways. The Central Military Commission, R&D wing, arms procurement wing, information and publicity wing, state committees and dalams spend huge amounts of money to arm the organisation with intelligence and sophisticated arms and ammunition.²⁷ A miniscule proportion, roughly an estimated 5 per cent of the annual earnings of the extremist groups, goes into financing development activities in their pockets of influence. These could be in the form of laying roads, minor irrigation projects and running mobile hospitals in remote parts of the country. Efforts are also made to diversify and improve agricultural production.

The amounts of funds being extorted and channelised are enormous and have acquired the shape of a lucrative business in certain pockets. The vested interests, who gain from this business, would do anything to sustain the movement. The mafia gangs in some districts of Bihar and other states have joined the Naxal groups just for the sake of the money that is involved.

Continuous Availability of Recruits

The extremists have been able to ensure both financial and social security to the youth in the deprived regions of the country. Lack of employment opportunities for the youth lures them towards the Naxals. Apart from

* The leaves are obtained from the tendu tree (*Diospyros Melanoxylon Roxb.*) belonging to Family Ebenaceae. These are used for making 'beedis'—the traditional Indian cigarette.

** *Kattha* i.e. Black Catechu (*Acacia Chundra Roxb*) is a herb having medicinal value.

economic security, it gives them a sense of empowerment and dignity. The prevailing security scenario also compels them to opt to join the Naxals for safety reasons as well. Joining a Naxalite group saves the recruit and his family from harassment from both the government officials and the Naxalites. One cannot depend on the police to secure one's family in these areas. The front organisations and the students unions play a major role in assuring a continuous flow of new recruits to the Naxal fold. It is a well known fact that the government policies have been unable to generate enough employment opportunities. The Naxals are able to harness the frustration and dissent among the unemployed educated youth. Now the youth from urban areas are also increasingly coming under the influence of the Naxals.

Lack of an Adequately Assessed and Coordinated Response from the Government

An appropriate assessment of any problem is the key to conceptualise, develop and implement appropriate strategies to counter it. It has been observed that there is no clear understanding of the nature and enormity of the threat that LWE poses. This has resulted in divergent approaches being adopted by different states and the central government, and their efforts remain largely uncoordinated. As of today, the notion of the formation of the "Red Corridor" that could compromise the territorial integrity of the state has been used to shift the discourse of Naxalites from being a "law and order problem" to being the "biggest internal security threat". National security is being used as a blanket term to cover up the state's confusion on devising ways and means to react to the multi-dimensional challenge the Naxal movement poses. Intrusive and insensitive security forces action in the Naxal affected regions also poses a threat to the socio-political and economic structures of those regions.

The state's response to the Naxal movement has been reactive, uncoordinated and inadequate. State action is constrained by geographical and political limitations. Therefore, there is no congruence of opinion and action between the central government and the state governments while taking measures towards countering the Naxal menace. Further complicating this is the lack of coordination between the police forces and intelligence

agencies of various affected states. The state police forces in the affected states are ill-equipped and ill-trained to successfully combat the serious threat posed by the Naxalites. To add to it, the Naxal affected states have the most adverse population-police personnel ratio which varies from Bihar 57, Jharkhand 98, Chhattisgarh 131, Orissa 99 and Andhra Pradesh 98 per 1,00,000 population, which is much lower than even peace-time requirements (the UN recommendation is 222).²⁸ In terms of police-area ratio, the situation is worse. The ratio varies from Bihar 54, Jharkhand 36, Chhattisgarh 22, Orissa 25 and Andhra Pradesh 29 per 100 sq km.²⁹ Apart from the above numbers, the state police faces huge infrastructural constraints. At present, about 38 central police and paramilitary forces (CPMF) battalions have been deployed in areas affected by the Naxal violence.³⁰ They have been at a disadvantage due to their ignorance of the terrain and lack of access to actionable intelligence. Besides, there is a lack of coordination between the state police forces and the CPMFs. The inaccessible nature of the areas in which the Naxals operate inhibits penetration of the forces in a significant way.³¹

Despite being better equipped and trained than the state police, the CPMFs lack the organisational structure and cohesiveness and the institutionalised operational experience of the army. A role for the army, therefore, has been often talked about. Given the rate at which the security situation has been deteriorating, it appears that, perhaps, sooner rather than later, the government might decide to call the army to tackle the rising tide of Maoist violence.

Various government policies lack proper implementation. Large amounts are being siphoned off from the various developmental funds. Security related funds such as that for the modernisation of police forces, however, remain unutilised in the Naxalite affected states (see Table 3). The surrender and rehabilitation policies have also been grossly misused and the surrendered extremists are turning into a gang of criminals leading land mafias and the extortion racket.³² In Andhra Pradesh, the government has initiated peace talks twice, but in vain as the Naxals' obsession for their ideology and lack of faith in the present system leaves little room for a meeting ground between the state and the revolutionaries.

Table 3
Expenditure Under the Police Modernisation Scheme in Jharkhand
(2000-04)

(Figures in Rs Crore)

Year	Funds released by GOI	State Funds	Total	Expenditure
2000-01	40.15	29.93	70.08	46.52
2001-02	28.94	47.34	76.28	53.18
2002-03	12.73	5.24	17.97	3.92
2003-04		30.74	30.74	43.57
Total	81.82	113.25	195.07	147.19

Source: http://www.cag.gov.in/html/cag_reports/jharkhand/rep_2004/civ_chapter_5.pdf

Since the causes for emergence and sustenance of LWE are still prevalent, or are being intensified and strengthened, the situation is becoming even worse. This could explain the fact that despite intense factionalisation and splits, popular support for various LEGs in areas where they operate has consolidated and the movement continues to get new foot soldiers. The movement is gaining ground and is emerging as a significant threat to the existing state structure.

How Do They Operate?

The strategies and tactics that the Naxalites adopt are in pursuance of their declared objective of seizing political power through the “barrel of the gun” and putting into place a “people’s democracy”. They have no faith in the existing parliamentary democratic system which they term as a “sham” and characterise as a “bourgeoisie democracy”. Armed revolution remains central to their strategy. Their ultimate aim is to rouse the peasantry in the countryside, to unfold an agrarian revolution, build a rural base, wage a guerrilla war, use the countryside to encircle cities and, finally, capture cities to liberate the whole country.³³

The movement follows a classic model enunciated by Mao Zedong. They adopt guerrilla warfare tactics to carry out their protracted and phased war of attrition against the state. They aim at gradually escalating it into a people’s war whenever the time is ripe for the same. It follows a sequence from sporadic

violent attacks, launching sustained guerrilla warfare even while increasing mass support and area of influence and, finally, a direct confrontation with the military forces. According to Mao, there are three phases in a revolution: Strategic Defence, Strategic Stalemate and Strategic Offensive.

The first phase aims at exposing the redundancy of the prevalent socio-economic and political structure and winning over the people in order to prepare a support base to launch more revolutionary actions. The front organisations play a major role in this phase and work to spread the message and elicit public support. These extremist groups function in a very systemic and planned manner. They conduct surveys and develop an understanding of the socio-economic conditions in a given area. Feeding upon grievances – real or perceived – that the people have against the state, they enter those areas and gradually entrench themselves. They then mobilise the masses around specific causes and raise their political consciousness. In the process, they identify the highly motivated people and turn them into fighters.³⁴ Their task is made easy by the absence of the structures of civil governance in the remote areas of the country. Once they gain more than a toehold in an area, they seek to eject the rudimentary structures of civil governance existing in those areas to attain and retain unquestioned sway and hold over them. They seek to declare “liberated” as many areas as possible.³⁵

The second stage – “Strategic Stalemate” – is that of competition between the state and the guerrillas over establishing control over a particular area. The rebels indulge in killings – of security force personnel, political leaders and civilians who they brand as police informers. They also resort to attacking police barracks and stations, breaking jails and looting armouries, blowing up of railway tracks, indulging in selective individual assassinations and abductions, bank robberies, looting, and so on.³⁶ They undertake abductions for ransom or for securing freedom for their jailed colleagues and interfere in democratic processes in the region where they exercise influence. Further, they hold kangaroo courts, dispensing quick justice, threaten corrupt government officials and rich landlords as well as political leaders who act against the interests of the people.

To earn adequate goodwill among the tribals and other deprived sections of the society, the Maoists undertake activities such as redistribution of land, enforce payment of minimum wages, impose taxes and penalties, hold

people's courts, destroy government property and enforce a social code in their areas of influence. At the same time, they organise peasants and tribals against traders and the government by which they are able to impress the tribals living in the remotest and most inaccessible areas. The inaccessible areas provide excellent havens for the Naxalites where they take shelter in tribal hamlets.³⁷ Support from the local population varies from genuine sympathy to coercion. This has a direct impact on the functioning of the state security forces in these areas as it cuts off their intelligence gathering channels. The state police forces are not able to gather actionable intelligence from the local people. Rather, the local support enhances the functioning of the guerrillas as they are aware of each and every movement of the security forces. Therefore, the guerrillas are able to plan and execute with precision, ensuring maximum damage to the state forces.

The aim of the Naxals at this stage of warfare is to set up "guerrilla zones" in different areas, to establish a parallel administration in these areas and finally convert them to liberated areas. While doing so, they aim at creating a political vacuum by targeting the village/taluka level politicians, forcing them to resign, to fill up the vacuum themselves. The Naxalites disrupt any kind of developmental activity in their area of influence that could assist the movement of the security forces. Besides, the developmental activities could also dry up the channels for new recruitment. They meticulously plant landmines to disrupt the movement of the security forces. During this stage, a well defined military organisational structure is also formed. This trend towards militarisation has been going on since the year 2000 when the PWG's "People's Guerrilla Army" came into existence. It later went on to merge with the PGLA of the MCC and retained the nomenclature of the latter.

The "Strategic Offence" stage is the decisive stage of the revolutionary armed struggle, the objective of which is to uproot the present democratic parliamentary structure. The first stage of this is the "mobile warfare stage". The objective is to "liberate" pockets of influence that would result in the state of "strategic equilibrium". The state would be confined to the cities and the extremists would dominate the rural and semi-urban areas. The concept of the establishment of the "compact revolutionary zone" falls well within this strategy. Certain audacious attempts such as jail-breaks, targeting of the

police stations and the use of sophisticated weaponry against the security forces are being analysed as attempts by the Maoists in India to enter into the initial stages of the offensive phase of their military strategy in certain pockets. Once battle fatigue sets in among the state forces, the extremists aim at embarking upon the next stage of strategic offence i.e. attacking cities and industrial hubs with a view to drive away the state forces and establish themselves as the political power.³⁸

The extremists plan and operate after detailed cost-benefit analysis of their acts. They have a flexible approach and do not hesitate to retreat whenever the situation demands. Whenever there is a pressure on them, they send signals for talks. The ceasefire/talks phase provides them an opportunity to regroup and replenish their depleted strength with fresh recruits whom they are able to train.

Their tactics have been evolving and are pragmatic. While pursuing their tasks of enlisting broader mass support, they adopt the latest information technologies to spread awareness about their ideology and goals. Their message is reaching millions through the internet, as was observed in the backdrop of the Nandigram incident in Bengal.³⁹ Their propaganda machine is guided by the respective central propaganda bureaus, besides the use of latest technologies and one-to-one contact. The Naxalites also utilise the cultural front to spread their message. They use folk songs, dances and drama to convey their message and to create an atmosphere where the Naxalites ideology finds acceptance. They also sensitise the masses through literature circulation. *Awam-e-Jung*, one of the main publications of the CPI (M) has a good circulation. They take up domestic and international issues for discussion and analysis in order to convince the people of the rationale, righteousness and imperative of an alternative system for which they have been struggling.

Front organisations play an important role in the functional strategies of the Naxals. They exploit the popular discontent and help provoke and mobilise anti-establishment sentiments, often by taking up legitimate grievances and issues that concern the local people. Lately, they have been making an attempt to influence international public opinion as well. This helps in further pressurising the government's efforts to counter the problem. The students and youth associations formed by them also

serve as breeding grounds for fresh cadres needed for renewing the revolutionary struggle.

They aim at paralysing the economy of the state and resort to imposing economic blockades in various regions of the country, causing extensive losses to both the private and public sector companies. The recent celebration of the *Jan Pituri Saptah** (June 2008) by the Naxals brought the transport and communication system to a halt over a large area. Such activities help them in their propaganda, motivate their cadres and project the helplessness of the government by which they are able to convince more and more people of their growing power. The industries located in their areas are attacked and damaged if they fail to pay protection money. The recent attacks on some industries such as the Essar group are a manifestation of this.

It has been often brought out that the Naxalites support certain political parties in elections. Local political leaders in different parts of the country often have an understanding with the Naxal groups, and the Naxals are able to influence the polling outcome. It has been reported that in Andhra, the Telengana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS) leaders resigned due to pressure from the CPI (M).⁴⁰ Recently, the en masse resignation of the local political leadership of the ruling party Janta Dal (United) — JD (U) — in Gaya⁴¹ bears testimony to the fact that the extremists have an overwhelming influence on the politicians of the areas under their influence.

The Naxalites are slowly and quietly aiming at stepping up activities in the urban areas as well.⁴² The discovery of research and development (R&D) facilities and manufacturing units and the arrest of cadres from various cities in different parts of the country indicate their urban presence. It is possible that the extremists are planning major operations in prominent cities like Mumbai and Delhi and various industrial hubs in the country.⁴³ Media reports suggest that the cadres are learning the Hindi dialect in their preparation to move to urban areas. They have plans to bring the urban unemployed and students into their fold. As has already been pointed out, various secret cells, students organisations and front organisations have a significant role to play in such activities. They are also trying to gradually find a place in the trade

* A “Revolutionary Week” observed by the Maoists every year.

and labour unions across various cities. During times of intensive combing operations in their operational areas, cities offer them places for hideouts, rest, planning and recruitment.

Left Wing Extremism as “India’s Greatest Internal Security Threat”

LWE in India poses a unique, multi-dimensional and comprehensive challenge to the Indian state structure. The multi-faceted problem has social, ideological, security, cultural, economic, political and strategic dimensions.⁴⁴ As it is being waged by the single largest armed group in the country, LWE is being perceived as the greatest internal security threat.

Expanding Territory of Influence and Operation

The presence of Naxalites in different parts of the country has been expanding. The intensity and scale of Naxalite activity varies from state to state. The assessments made in this regard also vary. The Ministry of Home Affairs puts the figure as low as 91 districts in 11 states.⁴⁵ Lately, it has been observed that the ministry is relying more on the reported incidents of violence perpetrated by the Naxals and tends to project the Naxal spread in terms of number of police stations. By this assessment, in 2007, the Naxals had a presence in 361 out of 10,027 police stations throughout the country (See Table 4). Some foreign sources put the figure as high as 192 out of the total 602 districts, with the cadre strength of around 25,000 and about 40,000 for logistical support.⁴⁶ Such sources state that the influence of the Maoists spreads across 16 out of the 28 states along the Red Corridor of 92,000 sq km from the Nepalese border to India’s southwest coast.⁴⁷ According to the Institute of Conflict Management, 194 districts across 16 states are affected, based on the activities of the LEGs present in different parts of the country and not merely on incidents of violence. This appears to be a more rational assessment as it takes into account the occurrence of all the activities, both major and minor, in which Naxalites are involved.

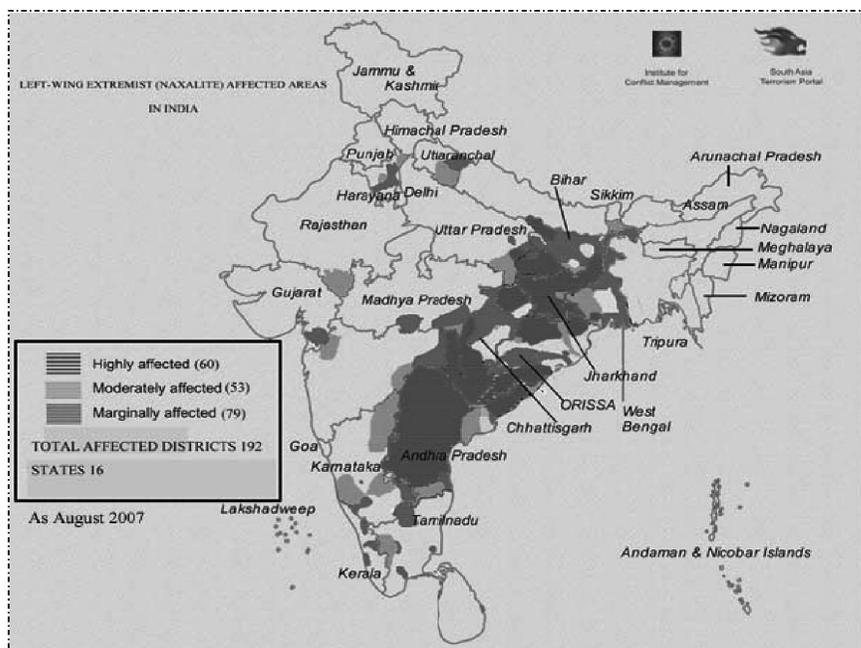
Table 4

STATE-WISE NUMBER OF POLICE STATION AREAS FROM WHERE NAXALITE VIOLENCE WAS REPORTED IN THE PERIOD 2003 TO 2007						
State	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total No of Police Stations in the State
Andhra Pradesh	183	149	188	93	59	1635
Bihar	100	106	80	69	71	834
Chhattisgarh	57	68	66	81	71	307
Jharkhand	96	101	79	85	99	310
Madhya Pradesh	4	4	4	4	06	924
Maharashtra	12	18	10	14	14	923
Orissa	14	15	13	22	18	464
Utter Pradesh	9	7	5	7	03	1432
West Bengal	4	6	7	12	08	411
Karnataka	2	4	6	6	04	805(
Kerala	10	4	-	2	05	443
Haryana	-	-	2	-	01	207
Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-	01	1332
Total	491	482	460	395	361	10027

Source: *Annual Report 2007-08*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

As brought out earlier, incidents of violence take place only during the “Strategic Stalemate” and “Strategic Offence” phases; hence, relying on just incidents of violence might leave out completely the areas where they have substantial but non-violent presence. The degree of influence and control over these areas varies from those that have become bastions to those that are being targeted to gain a presence. The sheer geographical expanse of the Maoist influence affects 40 per cent of India.⁴⁸ It is being feared that in the future their influence will spread to more states.

Map I: Spread of Maoists in India



Source: Institute of Conflict Management/ South Asia Terrorism Portal.

The Naxalite groups, particularly the CPI (M), have been expanding and consolidating their area of influence much beyond their traditional strongholds (Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa) into certain new areas such as Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka and Goa. As has been pointed out earlier, there is a gradual expansion into the urban areas as well. Naxal presence is being felt in some of the prominent Indian cities such as Mumbai, Pune and Delhi which clearly signal their urban shift. Map I depicts the level of Naxal presence across the country. About 65 districts which are said to be highly infested have been shown in dark grey colour. The relatively newer states which have been identified above have lower level of Naxal presence and have been depicted in lighter shades.

Different extremists groups have fraternal ties among themselves and they operate in their respective areas of influence. In these areas, through a range of informal understandings, such groups have divided the turf among themselves. A strategic congruity and coordination between the Naxals

operating in various states is evident. Of all the LEGs, the CPI (M) has the largest presence in different parts of the country. The CPI-ML (Janshakti) and the CPI-ML (Liberation) are also reported to have a sizeable presence and influence.

Growing Militarisation and Armoury

The biggest concern today is that of growing militarisation, spread and expanding numbers of LEG cadres. Naxalite groups have been making concerted efforts to militarise their cadres through formation of special guerrilla squads and expanding the base of their activities over large areas. The Naxal organisational profiles and strategies have been continuously evolving. The PLGA of the CPI (M) is no longer a poorly trained militia but a highly equipped force, trained on the lines of a regular army that has an elaborate command structure.⁴⁹ The Central Military Commission (CMC) is at the top of the hierarchy, followed by five Regional Bureaus. Under each Regional Bureau, there is a Zonal Military Commission, which is responsible for executing armed operations. The people's militia is at the bottom of this structure. Remarkable strategic congruity and coordination between the Naxal groups operating in various states have been observed. Their intelligence network appears to be far superior to that of the state police forces.

The Naxal guerrillas are capable of carrying out isolated large-scale military operations such as those witnessed in Jehanabad, Dantewada and Nayagarh in the last two years. The recent jail-breaks and armoury raids in different parts of the country suggest that they have acquired precision and are well trained in guerrilla tactics. There are indications that the cadres received training in the handling of weapons and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from some ex-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres. Their proficiency in setting off landmine explosions and the enhanced lethality and frequency of attacks also suggest that they have an adequate arrangement and network of training and operations. Making use of various innovative non-conventional apparatus and tactics gives them an added advantage. There is an element of surprise in their attacks, and, at times, the security forces are left with no option to even retaliate. The unification of the PWG and the MCC in September 2004, which resulted in the formation of a joint military

wing PLGA, has considerably enhanced their proficiency and prowess in implementing their operations.

Weapons possessed by the left extremists in India have evolved in nature and sophistication and increased in numbers. Their arsenal is a mix of hand-made agricultural tools, country-made weapons and sophisticated weapons. From the traditional farm equipment such as the sickle, crowbar, spear and the plough-head, they are now found in possession of modern guns (double and single barrel both .12 and .315 bore), light machine guns, SLRs, AK series rifles, other automatic weapons, shotguns and crude rocket launchers. One of the estimates suggests that they are in possession of 6,500 regular weapons, including AK-47 rifles and SLRs besides a large number of unlicensed country-made arms.⁵⁰ This has led to an increase in the potential for violence. Various indigenous manufacturing units are scattered both within and outside their area of influence. Besides having dedicated teams for repair and fabrication of weapons, they are said to have various R&D units as well. The discovery of arms making-cum-R&D units in Bhopal, Jamshedpur and Rourkela⁵¹ and the recovery of empty rocket shells and knocked down kits of rocket launchers that originated in the Amabattur industrial estate near Chennai suggest a pan-India network of manufacture and R&D. The level of sophistication of operations is enhanced by the use of satellite phones and IEDs.⁵² The accuracy with which they use rocket launchers reveals the level of military precision and sophistication that the guerrillas have attained. It suggests a major upgradation and intensification in the Naxal firepower from landmines to grenade launchers. Reports suggest that they have acquired 80 mm mortars and rocket propelled grenade rifles.⁵³

Their arms acquisition is mainly through armoury raids and snatching and looting the arms of the killed police officials. However, the procurement and distribution of sophisticated arms by LEGs is spread across the country. Frequent use of IEDs suggests the easy acquisition of sophisticated weapons and expertise in operating the same. Various channels/routes of import/smuggling of arms have also been identified. They procure gelatine sticks from contractors in the nearby mining areas. There are media reports that the CPI (M) has a budget of Rs.60 crore (600 million) for arms and ammunition procurement for the years 2007-09.⁵⁴ It has also been reported that the Naxals no longer rely on looting as the main source of arms procurement.

Rather, they are buying sophisticated arms from within and outside the country.⁵⁵ Lately, there has been an effort on their part to acquire urban warfare capabilities such as training in anti-aircraft guns, rigging remote-controlled explosive devices in cars, and even human bombs.⁵⁶

Threat to the Territorial Integrity of the Country and Stability of the Neighbourhood

The Naxals have been openly extending ideological support to the various secessionist armed struggles such as those of the Kashmiris, Assamese, Bodos, Mizos, Nagas and Gurkhas.⁵⁷ This could be perceived as a grave threat to the territorial integrity of the country. A difficult situation could arise if such groups together resolve to step up their activities against the Indian state.

Besides, the Communist Party of Nepal [CPN (M)] has been making continuous efforts to establish closer contacts with the CPI (M) which could further strengthen the LWE in India. The Nepalese Maoists and some India-based LEGs are already members of the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). The objective of the committee is to coordinate and consolidate unity among Maoist parties and organisations in South Asia and to lend mutual assistance, facilitate exchange of experiences and deepen bilateral and multilateral relations amongst extremist left wing groups in the subcontinent. The organisation is working with a well-thought out strategy of unifying the left wing extremist groups in the region. They have been able to achieve some success in that direction. The Nepalese Maoists have played a significant and crucial role in the emergence of another Maoist party in the subcontinent, the Communist Party of Bhutan – Marxist-Leninist-Maoist.⁵⁸

Besides, the CPI (M) and the CPN (M) have been trying to carve out a “Red Corridor” that would stretch between Nepal and the Dandakaranya forests in central India.⁵⁹ Some analysts such as Nagesh Kumar⁶⁰ and Chakrabarty⁶¹ have a view that the corridor might actually stretch further south to Tamil Nadu. The creation of such a corridor would allow them unquestioned sway over the area. This would facilitate the easy movement of arms across the subcontinent and would help in safely re-locating rebel cadres in distant areas in the wake of the security forces intensifying their operations against the guerrillas in an area. This would also facilitate an expansion of extremists’ presence in newer areas.

There is no clarity about whether and to what extent these linkages have helped the Indian Naxalites. However, some instances suggest that they might have helped in the procurement of ammunition. The seizure of a thousand rounds of ammunition with Czech markings from a CPI (ML-Janshakti) dump in Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh substantiates this viewpoint.⁶² It is unclear whether these extra-regional linkages have become a regular and reliable source of weapons supply to Indian Naxalite groups.

The connection between some of the LEGs in India and the LTTE has often been highlighted. There is a view that the erstwhile PWG [now CPI (M)] had links with the LTTE and had received expertise in using improvised explosive devices from the Sri Lankan outfit.⁶³ Bandaru Dattatreya, then union minister of state for railways, stated in the Lok Sabha on December 10, 1991, that the group had acquired 60 AK-47s and 20 sten guns from the LTTE.⁶⁴

The international affiliations and fraternal ties of the extremists groups in India with the Nepalese Maoists and supposedly the LTTE add to the threat they pose to the Indian state. With Pakistan's external intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate, becoming increasingly active along the Bihar-Nepal border and the growing use of Nepalese and Bangladeshi territory by the ISI for anti-India activities, there are apprehensions that the ISI may also incorporate LEGs in its strategy to destabilise India. Different LEGs in India have had fraternal ties with similar groups in other parts of the world ever since the movement began. Radio Peking hailed the Naxalbari outbreak as the "spring thunder" of revolution in India, offering encouragement to the revolutionaries by recognition of their authenticity.⁶⁵ The 2007 Congress of the CPI (M) was attended by delegates from Bangladesh and Philippines-based extremist organisations.

Threat to the Economy, Infrastructure and Lines of Communication

Unlike other regional insurgencies that have affected India till date, the aim of the left wing extremists is to finally grab political power at the Centre so as to affect a revolutionary change in the country as a whole. This cannot be possible unless they have control over the arteries of communication. Therefore, there has been a concerted effort by these groups to gradually enhance their control over the means of mobility. Incidentally, the Naxal affected areas are

geographically and strategically so placed that they can exercise considerable influence on most of the surface arteries of communication, especially the rail traffic. The Naxal groups are levying tax on every truck that passes through their area.⁶⁶ This poses a severe threat to the movement of goods and people within a large part of the country. The extremists' control over the rich mineral resources and the trade/transport arteries may strengthen their control and bargaining power in the future.

While observing economic blockades to protest the governmental policies or arrests of the cadres or for some other reasons, they target the infrastructure, especially the rail network,⁶⁷ energy installations and the communication systems to cripple the economy.⁶⁸ During the observance of the *Jan Pituri Saptah* in the last week of June 2008, they brought the economy and the transport network to a standstill at various places over a large area. They also resort to damaging vital power infrastructure such as blasting high power transmission towers which has severe implications on the communication networks and the movement of people, goods and services in a region, resulting in huge financial losses to the state and private companies, especially the mining industries. It has been reported that they aim at carrying out similar operations near the major cities such as Mumbai and Delhi and some of the largest industrial complexes to spread panic and create an impression of lawlessness and anarchy.⁶⁹

The successful conduct of these blockades underlines their considerable hold over the economic activities in the regions of their influence. These can strangle the industries depending on coal and iron ore from these regions. They have been opposing the globalisation and privatisation process that the country has undertaken. These activities discourage the investor to set up enterprises in these regions and the mineral resources remain untapped. The lack of investment has a direct implication for the developmental statistics of the region and rising unemployment which is conducive to the growth of the various Naxal groups.

High Number of Casualties

The numbers of casualties due to the Naxal violence (Table 6) are far more than those due to other insurgencies and acts of terrorism in the country. The coming into being of several civil armed vigilante groups (*Salwa Judum*) has

further worsened the situation. As of date, there are 23 Salwa Judum camps in which about 50,000 people from 600 villages stay.⁷⁰ In the long-term, these armed groups could emerge as a serious threat to the state. Naxal violence has severely damaged the social fabric of those regions beyond repair. The mass displacement of the tribals and natives into temporary camps could also, in the long-term, have an impact on the demography and socio-economic profile of the region. Many villages have been already been wiped off from the maps in these regions.⁷¹ If ever these people return to their native homes, there is a high probability of their clash with those who had preferred to stay on. On the other hand, if they continue living in these camps without adequate means of livelihood, then there is a fair chance that they could be diverted to crime.

Table 5

Table Depicting the Number of Incidents and Casualties in the Naxal Affected States (2003-07)

State	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	Incidents	Casualties								
Andhra Pradesh	577	140	310	74	535	208	183	47	138	45
Bihar	250	128	323	171	186	96	107	45	135	64
Chhattishgarh	256	74	352	83	385	168	715	388	582	369
Jharkhand	342	117	379	169	312	119	310	124	482	157
Madhya Pradesh	13	1	13	4	20	3	6	1	9	2
Maharashtra	75	31	84	15	94	53	98	42	94	25
Orissa	49	15	35	8	42	14	44	9	67	17
Uttar Pradesh	13	8	15	26	10	1	11	5	9	3
West Bengal	6	1	11	15	14	7	23	17	32	6
Kerala	12	-	5	-	-	-	2	-	8	-
Karnataka	4	-	6	1	8	8	10	-	7	5
Haryana	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-
Tami Nadu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total	1597	515	1533	560	1608	677	1509	678	1565	696

Source: *Annual Report 2007-08*. Number of Incidents and Casualties in the Naxal Affected States (2003-07)

Threat to the Nation-Building Process

The Naxals advocate the right to “self-determination”⁷² and, therefore, extend ideological support to the various separatist movements. They profess and promulgate the realisation of a system that does not recognise

the present state structure, and make concerted efforts to uproot the latter. Such efforts prevent the integration of the deprived and marginalised sections of the society into the mainstream. Though the nation-building process in India has been a very slow one, they have been able to short-circuit the same. For them, a nation does not exist; rather, they are at war with the nation in which they live. They project the state as an exploiter. These tendencies could severely damage the nation-building process which is still in a nascent stage.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Naxal challenge has emerged as a major internal security threat to the Indian state. Though there is no dearth of policies, approaches and fund allocations, the efficient and transparent implementation of the same remains a distant reality. The foremost responsibility of the state, and the need of the hour, is to uphold the law of the land, provide security of life and property and a secure environment for development and economic growth in the areas which have been deeply affected by the Naxalite violence. In such areas, the only alternative is the use of force as in these areas, extremism has reached a stage where it has acquired a dynamic entirely of its own, one that is self-sustaining unless forcefully and forcibly disrupted.⁷³

The need to create an adequate security environment, especially in the 65 districts where the Naxalites are said to run a parallel government, is a must. In areas where there is only a thin presence of Naxalites, developmental initiatives could be undertaken alongside. Once an adequate security environment and rule of law is reinstalled, large scale developmental measures, with maximum accountability and efficiency need to be undertaken.

On the security front, coordination and cooperation among the states and the Centre and among the security forces is most needed. The Centre has set up dedicated mechanisms such as the formation of the coordination centre, the task force on inter-state coordination and an inter-ministerial group to continuously monitor and ensure such coordination. The Naxal-affected states have also undertaken efforts in this direction recently. To this effect, the first ever joint anti-Naxalite operation was conducted by the police forces of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra in March

2008. The immediate result of this was that after decades, night halts have been possible in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.

The affected states also need to enhance their capabilities to counter the problem. Some states have set up counter-insurgency and jungle warfare training centres which would definitely strengthen the prowess, morale and operational efficiency of the state police forces. Recent moves by some of the state governments to increase the allowance of the police personnel for participating in anti-Naxal operations should be replicated by other states. The technological upgradation of the forces that are involved in anti-Naxalite operations is a must. The forces must be equipped with the latest equipment and devices. The option of the use of some relevant state-of-the-art technologies such as the geographical information system (GIS) to enable them to track extremists in hilly terrain and dense forests which remained unsurveyed till date, could be explored.

As far as the involvement of the army is concerned, deep reservations have been expressed. The government has ruled out the deployment of the army for the anti-Naxal operations.⁷⁴ Within the armed forces also, there is great clarity that the army should not get involved in this problem. While the involvement of the army is clearly undesirable in dealing with the problem, a non-combat role for the army could be envisaged in imparting training, providing logistic support, medical services and technical equipment and expertise to the paramilitary forces that are deployed in Naxal affected areas.

The central and state governments also need to focus on the underlying causes of unrest which are poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and underdevelopment as these provide sustenance to the movement. The government needs to seriously undertake land and electoral reforms and ensure that the deprived sections of the society are brought into the mainstream of development. These have to be complemented by a sustained, patient and committed effort aimed at ensuring better governance and dignity and adequate means of livelihood. Again, the proper implementation of those initiatives needs to be ensured.

Irrespective of the quantum of funds allocated, no substantial result can be expected unless the schemes are efficiently and transparently implemented from top to bottom. The administration has to act proactively before it

is too late. The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy 2007 are some steps that have been recently taken by the government on the developmental front. All these need consistent monitoring. The government should come up with more practical schemes which aim at equitable development of the affected regions and generation of employment.

There can be no immediate solution to the Naxal problem. It will take decades for the affected areas to normalise. The first priority should be to contain the tide of Maoist expansion and reinforce the writ of law in the affected states. Adequate security should be assured in the affected regions first; then development can follow. The maintenance of law and order is the responsibility and prerogative of the state and not of the citizens. The option of vigilante groups should be done away with. It can have adverse effects in the long term. It is high time to undertake administrative, electoral and judicial reforms to make the government machinery professional, accountable and proactive. There will never be a meeting ground between the state and the Naxals as the ultimate objective of the latter is to uproot the former. Therefore, the government should not waste time and energy on the negotiating table and must stick to its policy of no talks until the Naxals lay down arms. The experience of the army could be harnessed in imparting training, providing logical support, medical services and technical equipment and expertise to the paramilitary forces that are deployed in Naxal affected areas.

End Notes

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